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SUBJECT: NATIONAL RECONCILIATION COMMISSION RELEASES FULL REPORTS FROM TAK BAI AND KRUE SE INCIDENTS

REF: A) 04 BANGKOK 5360 B) BANGKOK 687 C) 04 BANGKOK

3111 D) 04 BANGKOK 2941

11. (U) SUMMARY: The National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) recently released the complete texts of reports authored by two government-authorized "Independent Commissions" which investigated separate high casualty incidents in 2004 in southern Thailand involving Thai security forces. In April 2004, 32 armed insurgents were killed at the Krue Se Mosque and 85 demonstrators were killed at the Tak Bai Police Station in October 2004. No startling new facts were revealed about either event. However, the full reports do provide more details about the shooting of 7 of 85 demonstrators killed at Tak Bai and actions of military commanders shortly after the crackdown began. Muslim leaders generally reacted positively to the NRC's release of the reports but again voiced concern that promised compensation to families of those killed has not been dispersed. The NRC met again on May 9 to set up sub-committees to pursue specific goals more systematically. END SUMMARY.

ONE YEAR LATER: THE (IN)-COMPLETE STORY OF APRIL 28, 2004 AND KRUE SE MOSQUE

12. (SBU) After completing a three-day fact-finding trip in Narathiwat Province on April 20, the 48-member NRC released the complete texts of the reports from separate Independent Commissions (authorized by the Thai government) on the controversial Tak Bai and Krue Se Mosque incidents. During the fact-finding trip, NRC members had been urged to release these reports by religious leaders and families of victims from the violence in the South, many of whom argued that doing so would clear the air significantly. The NRC also consulted with police and military officials in the South (and perhaps the issue was discussed privately with the Prime Minister). The Thai media aired the debate over the value of releasing the full texts. On April 20, after a closed session meeting of the NRC, Chairman and former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun appeared at a press conference and provided copies of the 52-page Tak Bai report and the 38-page Krue Se report to the media. "We insist on transparency," he said. English versions of the reports can be found on the Internet site of The Nation newspaper at: <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/specials/takbai>.

13. (U) The Krue Se report covers only one of several violent incidents that occurred in three different provinces on April 28, 2004. As noted in the report, "Some 100 militants staged simultaneous assaults on seven targets in Yala, three in Pattani, and one in Songkhla." The full report provides details about the weapons used by the militants and security forces, names of persons involved on both sides and a detailed timeline. This is in contrast to the four-page summary report released on August 4, 2004 by the RTG. The authors of the full report state that autopsies were not performed on the bodies of the 31 militants killed by Thai Special Forces at Krue Se Mosque. However, samples of body fluids were taken and later tests concluded that no narcotics or other "illegal substances" were present. (Note: This appears to contradict an official RTG statement of April 29, 2004 stating, "the perpetrators were under the influence of drugs and were instigated to resort to violence. It was disclosed that those arrested were subject to urine test (sic) and found to have taken drugs." See Reftel C. End Note.) The full report criticizes General Panlop Pinmanee, Deputy Director of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), who ordered the raid on the Mosque, as well as then-4th Army Commander General Pisan Wattanawongkhiri, for failing to negotiate with the insurgents. "In their negotiations with the militants, anti-riot forces conducted no talks, but simply announced a series of warnings to encourage surrender."

SOME TAK BAI DEMONSTRATORS SHOT FROM A DISTANCE

14. (SBU) In contrast to the Krue Se report, the full Tak Bai report is much more detailed and offers more specific accounts and recommendations (Ref B). The full report reveals that after examining the bodies of the demonstrators, forensic scientist Dr. Pornthip Rojanasunan concluded that,

"it was clear the victims (at the Tak Bai police station) died of gunshot wounds caused by bullet shot from distance (sic)." Another part of the report reveals that Queen Sirikit summoned General Pisan to an audience at Narathiwat Palace at 12 midnight on October 26. The report notes that Gen. Pisan, the 4th Army Commander, also met with PM Thaksin at a hotel in Narathiwat the same night. Among the recommendations not previously revealed is the suggestion that the RTG produce radio and TV programs in the Malayu (Yawi dialect) language to create understanding between the local populace and the government. The report also suggests that the RTG "avoid the implementation" of martial law and employ "the Emergency Administration Emergency Situation Act B.E. 2495 (1953)," which provides for some civilian control over the military.

MUSLIM REACTION: RTG GETTING BETTER, BUT WHERE'S THE MONEY?

15. (U) Muslim leaders welcomed the release of the reports. Some Embassy contacts from the Islamic Committees of Pattani and Yala complained that the reports were not released in Yawi and therefore many Thai Muslims, particularly older religious and community leaders, still did not have full access to them. Media reports quoted families of those killed on April 28 as stating that they have not yet received 20,000 baht (\$512) in compensation promised to them by the RTG last year. The families of the young members of the Ban Suso soccer team in Saba Yoi, Songkhla are among those with this complaint. One reported eyewitness of events at Saba Yoi was quoted in The Nation newspaper as saying, "Of the 19 dead bodies we found at the scene, 14, including my younger brother Kamaridin, were shot in the head." The policy of providing compensation for the families of those killed by security forces on April 28 is controversial among military commanders. (Note: Five Thai security forces were killed and 21 injured in the affected areas on April 28. See Reftel D. End Note.)

NRC CREATES SUBCOMMITTEES

16. (U) On May 9, the NRC held its third full, formal meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in Bangkok. The one-day meeting followed a weekend trip by Chairman Anand to Narathiwat to meet with victims from the Tak Bai incident and some of the families of those killed in Saba Yoi, Songkhla on April 28, 2004. At this meeting, the NRC decided to set up five subcommittees charged with responsibilities as follows: 1) Promote Justice and Human Rights, to be chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Chaturon Chaisaeng; 2) Solve Conflict through Peaceful Means, to be chaired by Phra Paisarn Wisaro, a well-known Buddhist monk; 3) Study the Development of Human Security, to be chaired by Amnar Siamwalla; 4) Promote Cultural Diversity in Thailand, to be chaired by Prawes Wasi, a leading public intellectual and social activist; and, 5) Promote Local Harmony and Cooperation, to be chaired by General Narong Denudom, a Muslim former 4th Army Commander. It was also announced that PM Thaksin would recommend for cabinet approval on May 10, a resolution to drop pending criminal charges against 58 Tak Bai demonstrators. The NRC will next meet in Narathiwat on May 20.

17. (SBU) Comment: The NRC under Anand's leadership has taken a bold first step by releasing the full reports. This move is responsive to calls from human rights NGOs and the Muslim community for a more open process in its investigation of two of the most important cases of claimed human rights violations committed against Thai Muslims in the last year. To his credit, PM Thaksin has not objected to the release of these controversial documents, although his administration had earlier explicitly refused to do so. Significantly, the first year anniversary of the events of April 28 passed without any major violence or separatist attacks. End Comment.

BOYCE